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# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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### GROTON FISH HATCHERY *ca* 1900



1905 Groton Trout Stripping Station

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There are references to a fish hatchery already being in Groton, Vermont when Senator Silas L. Griffith (1837-1903) purchased the timberlands, sawmill, buildings, and mill pond from Judge Jonathan R. Darling of Groton in 1898

Mr. Darling established the logging and lumber business there about 1890 and had the dam constructed at the foot of Clough meadow forming the mill pond which was known then as Darling pond.

But who built the fish hatchery? Did Judge Darling do it, or have the state do it? The state built their first fish hatchery in Duxbury, VT in 1891. A photo postcard from 1905 is labeled *U. S. Trout stripping Station, Groton, VT.*

Perhaps Senator Griffith built it before he bought the property from Judge Darling in 1898? He was supplying fresh trout to the Waldorf Astoria

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Hotel in New York City before the turn of the century. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, states “As a sideline Griffith harnessed the cool mountain streams to create a fish hatchery, perhaps the first in the state, eventually supplying the [Waldorf Astoria in New York City](#) with fresh trout. In 1898 then Senator Griffith acquired both timberland and a fish hatchery in [Groton, VT](#). That fish hatchery was reputed to be the largest in the world and provided spawn for stocking rivers and lakes as well as adult fish for eating.”

After Mr. Griffith’s death in 1903 his business empire shut down. Years of cutting on his 50,000+ acres of forestland had harvested most of the old growth trees, a disgruntled enemy had poisoned his fish hatchery, and charcoal was being replaced by oil. The U. S. Forest Service acquired much of his land for Green Mountain National Forest, but 200 acres surrounding Darling pond was purchased in 1910 by Mr. Theodore Newton Vail (1845-1920), President of AT&T.

The fish hatchery was there in 1910 when Mr. Vail purchased the property and renamed it VAIL POND. He apparently used it to stock the pond with fish for his associates who visited him for business conferences at the logging camp building he remodeled to accommodate the meetings and guests.

When Mr. Vail died in 1920, the property was managed by his Trust until it was purchased by Mr. Robert Plimpton Peckett (1871-1959), owner of Peckett’s-on-Sugar Hill Inn Resort at Sugar Hill, NH. No reference has been found to the fish hatchery being used by Mr. Peckett.

Mr. Harry K. Noyes a Buick Dealer for New England purchased the property in the 1930’s and did extensive repairs to the building and the dam, increasing the size of the pond. He changed the name of the pond to SEYON (Noyes spelled backwards) and kept it stocked with trout, supposedly from the fish hatchery, for his guests to enjoy their fishing experiences.

Mr. Arland Frederick Calvin Robitzer (1915-1988) purchased 3,300 acres of surrounding timberland with the buildings, pond and hatchery from the Noyes family in 1955 and operated a resort business he named SEYON FISHING AND HUNTING RANCH. He used the hatchery for a year or so, according to his daughter, Bonnie (Robitzer) Blau, but abandoned it because the fish were able to reproduce naturally in the pond. He sold the property in 1967 to the State of Vermont,

The fish hatchery was not found in the state literature describing the property nor in archived listings of state fish hatcheries. Lise Shallberg is still researching it's history.

The property is now SEYON LODGE STATE PARK, part of the 27,000-acre Groton State Forest, providing rustic facilities on the shores of NOYES POND.

Noyes Pond is the main attraction at Seyon Lodge, offering fly-fishing for native square tail brook trout. Only row boats are allowed on the pond.



Recent picture of the abandoned fish hatchery at Seyon Lodge State Park by Tiffany and Chris Soukup.

## The Groton Town Library Building

My Recollection & Historical Research

By Allen Goodine

August 2019

This was my home growing up in the Town of Groton. At the time of this writing I am 73 years old. When I look back at the building and my memories I don't know how I got to this age. I was the adopted child of Alice and Henry Goodine and came to live here when 5 months old in May of 1946. At college age, I moved away, but recently have moved back to our 109-year-old family property at Groton Pond. I've been researching history of the Library building and this is a brief overview with my recollections, and some family history of Charles C. Lord (1864-1944) and Alice (Lord) Goodine (1905-1998).

In 1930 the house was purchased by my grandparents, Charles C. and Etta (Wilds) Lord. I've been able to find a clear title back to 1915 in the Groton town records. Prior to sale to my grandparents the property was owned by the Wells River Savings Bank and Warren and Cora (Benzie) Carpenter. Warren Carpenter (1879-1938) was a mail carrier in 1910 and 1920 Groton censuses. He was the son of Andrew Jackson "Jack" Carpenter (1832-1915) and Emily (Welch) Carpenter (1844-1913). Somewhere between 1915 and 1925 it was owned by Ida (Morrison) McLam (1875-1946) and later Marion (Burke) Collins (1912-.2008)

The property records are unclear prior to 1915. However, Warren's deed stated it was his family residence. The 1875 Beers map of Groton village shows the property where the house sits, owned by Jonathan Robards Darling (1823-1910). A story written by Katherine Blaisdell in the 1970's about Inns and Innkeepers – Groton History, discusses the property located adjacent and up from the building that today is the Ice Cream store (and formally part of the John K. White Estate General Store). It was a Tavern/Inn, once operated by McLane Marshall (1816-1889) of Bristol Bill infamy, and owned in 1867 by William Jones (1833-1926) and in 1877 transferred to Jonathan R. Darling. About this time the tavern was relocated (to site of Library), reconstructed and became the home of A. J Carpenter who occupied it for many years before his son Warren Carpenter mentioned above. (see *Mister Glover's*

*Groton* p. 118)

The home was purchased in 1930 by Charles C. and Etta Lord. Charles C. Lord was a printer. He moved from Orange, where he was born, to West Topsham in 1894 and started his first newspaper THE OBSERVER moved to Groton in 1896 and printed the first issue of the GROTON TIMES in Jan. 1897. The weekly paper reached a circulation of 1,000 by 1900. He was Groton town representative to the State Legislature, built a camp at Groton Pond in 1907 and moved to Island pond in 1917, then to St. Johnsbury in 1919, and back to Groton in 1929. On return to Groton he had a printing shop beneath the Post Office built by George Millis (1866-1948) in the late 1920's, where he did specialty printing. His profile is listed in the 1901 history of Groton residents.

His daughter, Alice, lived in this house with her parents in 1933 when she married Henry Goodine (1903-1973), who was a barber and shop owner of Henry's Diner and Barbershop. After Henry died, Alice lived in this residence until 1998 at the age of 93. The home had two living spaces, one upstairs and one downstairs laid out much as it is today.

Alice was born in Groton in 1905, attended St Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Normal School. Upon graduation she taught school in several one-room schoolhouses and later taught first grade in the Groton Elementary/High School building. She was there in 1930-1935 and Madeline (Darling) Dana who is now 90 was a first-grade student. After I came along she was no longer teaching but partnered with my Dad at their business down the street, Henry's Diner, Variety Store and Barber-shop (the Weeds Hotel building) now torn down and a vacant lot adjacent to the Post Office.

My Mom was active in the Groton Methodist Church and played the organ for services, funerals, and weddings for 60 years until she was 89 years old. She had been on the school board and ran the family business after Henry's death until about 1977. She was active in the Groton Historical Society and supported publishing *Mr. Glover's Groton* our town history book. Her father Charles Lord and Waldo Glover started dis-

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cussing the “book” in the 1940s. As our town historians deceased she became the history resource person in Town. Many of my memories are of her stories about how things were in the early 1900s. She held choir rehearsal in the living room much of the time while I was growing up.

Alice and Henry were 40 and 42 when they adopted me. Mom was a Vermont die-hard republican who didn't mince words about her political belief, or many other things for that matter. She was very giving to individuals and the community and would have loved that her home became the Town Library.

When younger, I remember high snowbanks and jumping off an adjacent garage roof. Our garden was north of the buildings where upper parking is now located. The barn which is the west attachment to the library was our garage, below for the family car, or later for one of my many antique vehicles; and was used for this until sale in 2004. The upper level area west end of barn had been my grandfathers workshop accessed from directly below or barn doors adjacent to our garden. Above the workshop was a loft area. During my childhood this area contain old chicken feeders and an assortment of items no longer used. The area above with the glass exposed (today) was a swing door accessing the upper barn. This was open area for storage. A large enclosed shed was attached to the upper apartment in the rear of the building.

Today there is still an apartment upstairs. My grandfather moved up there after his wife died in 1933. Charles C. Lord died in 1944 at age 80. We lived downstairs, but the upper part of the east wing was the bathroom (old porcelain tub) and two bedrooms. I had one of the bedrooms. There were no storm windows in either bedroom so lingering in the morning during winter was not an option.

Our kitchen was on ground level in the east wing-back with steep cellar stairs going to a dirt floor cellar that had had a well located in the center of the cellar. There were a second set of stairs leading to the front porch (our main entrance). The porch had a trap door exposing these stairs. Within the cellar there was a tiny space enclosed for storage of pickles and other items stored before refrigeration. Hot water was provided by a steel tank in the kitchen area and heated by the cook stove.

We added an artesian well in the early 70's, but previously, water was supplied by a spring located on land which is easterly adjacent to the Fire House. It supplied all the General Store, our house and the house east of the current Library (built by Hon. J. R. Darling).

The large room to the right of the current Library entrance was our living room. I spent many hours playing with my toys on the large rug in that room. It also had one of the central registers for heat in the winter. In my lifetime heating was wood/coal and then converted to oil in a central furnace. Later that furnace was removed (early 70s) for a more modern oil burning furnace

Digressing back to the building history, I understand it was once a millinery store and more recently told Cora Carpenter sold corsets there. This was probably in the living room area, hence the large windows and a second front entrance. It was probably in the late teens to the mid-20s and I only speculate that Marion Collins may also have operated a store here.

There is an attic above the upstairs apartment; with an outside door. I have determined the part of the house that was originally a tavern was probably the westerly and larger section of the building as it does not have a cellar.

In 2004, we sold the property to the Gilman Housing Trust who (through federal funding) spent thousands of dollars restoring the structure. I remember the huge boulders used for cellar and barn walls and in later years needed work/reinforcement. They raised the whole structure constructing new basement walls and partial walls beneath the westerly part of the building.

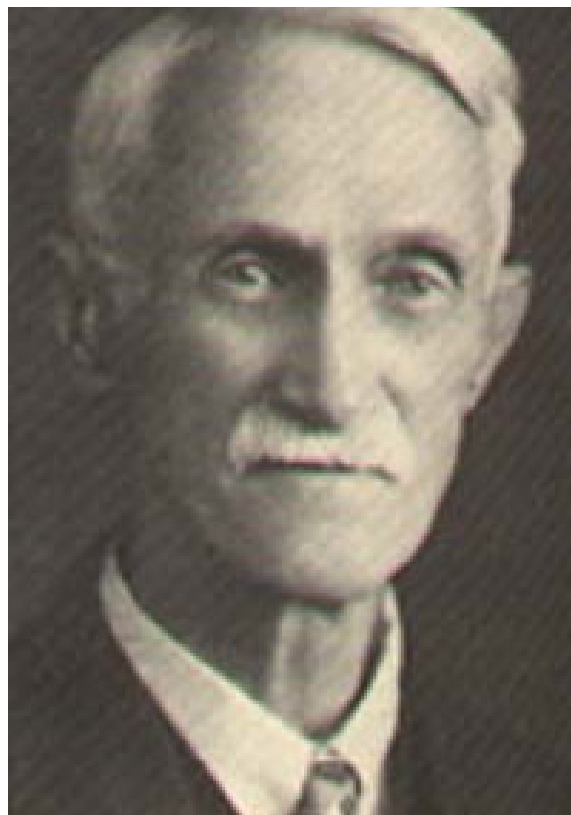
We are delighted the building has been restored and has been converted to Groton's Library.



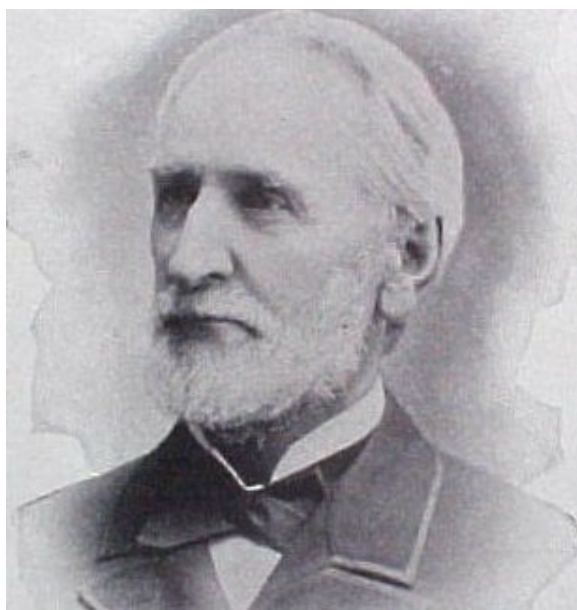
## PICTURES of some people mentioned



Alice Lord Goodine 1905-1998



Charles C. Lord 1864-1944



Jonathan Robards Darling 1823-1910



Silas L. Griffith 1837-1903



## In this Newsletter



Theodore N. Vail 1845-1920



George B. Hatch MD 1851-1897



Arland F. Robitzer 1915-1988



Andrew J. "Johnny" White 1898-1965

## JOHNNY WHITE'S MEMORIES OF GROTON

The Groton Historical Society has printed Johnny White's Memories of Groton that he wrote around 1955 from what he remembered and what he had been told for his relatives Jackie and Lois White. The 24-page booklet is available from GHS.

Andrew John "Johnny" White was born 17 Sep 1898 to Fred and Clara (Webber) White and he died 21 July 1965. He never married and lived with his parents in Groton. His mother died in 1934 and his father in 1945. Johnny lived in the family home on the south side of the Wells River across from Morrison Hall on the north side. He did odd jobs for townspeople and worked some at the railroad station and the town cemetery.

Johnny made numerous historical notes about the happenings in Groton for the first half of the twentieth century. He lists the Doctors , Town Representatives, and Town Officers that he could remember. He also lists the telephone offices, poolrooms, drug stores, barbershops, creameries and other businesses. Although Waldo Glover had been hired by the Town to write a Town History in the 1940's there was not much progress until after World War II and it was not completed until 1978 by GHS, two years after his death. Johnny's notes contribute to the History of Groton and will be helpful in learning where in town the people of Groton lived .

He also listed the places in Groton by the names of residents in 1955 and recalls who was living there in the early 1900's. Since people tend to move, it is sometimes difficult to recall just where individuals lived in 1955, so the Society is planning to identify the present mailing address where the 1955 occupant was living. And perhaps even prepare a map showing where the early 1900 residents and the 1955 residents lived in Groton.

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## THE HATCH BLOCK

Doctor George B. Hatch (1851-1914) returned to Groton in 1897 after practicing medicine in Newbury for 15 years. In addition to his medical practice, he realized the need for more housing in town for employees of Groton Turning works, the sawmills, stone sheds and other businesses. The Weed Hotel, Groton Hotel, the Cliff house, and boarding house in Little Italy could not handle the hundreds of workers attracted to the Groton businesses and several individuals were taking in boarders. He built the Hatch Block to help alleviate the housing shortage in the rapidly expanding town whose population exceeded 1,000 by the turn of the century in 1900.



The Hatch Block was occupied on the ground floor at different times by Hoyt Drug Store, Town Clerk's Office, Telephone Central Office, plus others. In addition rooms were available for renters and the top floor was an open hall for rent.

In the 1930's McLure's Student Band rented the hall for band practices. And Groton High School rented it for Agriculture classes before they acquired the blacksmith shop on the river behind the Post Office which was built by George Millis next door to his home.

A number of fires in the 1920's and the depression of the 1930's decimated many of the businesses in town and the population declined by more than 40 percent. The Hatch Block then became apartments for family living.

After Dr. Hatch's death in 1914 ownership changed hands with George Scott Welch (1881-1977) owning it in the 1950's when it was known as the Welch Block. Mr. Welch's grandson, Harold Puffer and his wife Janet purchased it in the 1970's and named it Welch Apartments. They remodeled the building bringing it up to code and sold it to Royal Electric. Gilman Housing Trust purchased it after the turn of the century as part of their project to provide subsidized housing for townspeople.

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## SILAS LAPHAM GRIFFITH 1857-1903

From Wikipedia 1/7/2020

S. L. Griffith known as the Lumber King of Vermont was a businessman and politician. His lumber and charcoal operations made him Vermont's first millionaire and a major landowner. In 1898 he purchased the Groton timberlands, complete with logging, sawmilling and fish hatchery operations from Jonathan R. Darling.

Silas Griffith was born June 27, 1837 in Danby, VT and worked as a boy on the family farm. Even as a youth he showed a flair for driving a hard bargain and reinterpreting rules to his own benefit. His father offered to pay his sons for every rock moved from a field. The other brothers dutifully carried theirs to the stone walls around the field while Silas put his in several piles in the field.

He attended school until age 16 then worked a few years at local stores in Danby, and East Dorset. With his savings he attended Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH for one year which completed his formal schooling.

Griffith then headed west for a teaching job, but the financial panic of 1857 stranded him in Buffalo, NY. His savings being devalued prevented him continuing west or returning home. With money advanced by a local bank he returned home to Danby where, he borrowed money from an uncle, to open a general store in his hometown.

His natural aptitude for business made the store flourish. By the time he was 27 his business was valued at \$48,000, over \$800,000 in today's dollars. The business continued to prosper, and Griffith's interests spread. He built a new store - at 3 stories it was the tallest building in southern Vermont. He also developed a municipal water system for the town of Danby.

Griffith married Elisabeth Staples who bore him three daughters and a son. Two daughters died before the age of two and his son died at the age of ten. Only his daughter Jenny survived to adulthood.

After 20+ years of marriage, and an unusual event for that time, his wife sued for divorce on the grounds of "intolerable severity". The divorce was granted, and he paid her a onetime settlement of \$20,000. Shortly after he paid his secretary a onetime settlement of \$10,000 as well, suggesting alternative definitions of "intolerable severity".

In 1891 Griffith was remarried, to a distant cousin from Philadelphia, Katherine Teil, 18 years his junior. The new Mrs. Griffith was adamant that she would not live in the same house where Griffith had lived with his first wife. He promptly had the old house torn down (the lumber carefully saved and burned to make charcoal) and built a new beautiful home for his beautiful bride. The home boasted sweeping views, intricate woodwork, and exquisite stained-glass windows. Today the estate is open to overnight guests as the Silas Griffith Inn.

Although he had several businesses already, his real fortune came from

Vermont's forested mountains. He acquired several large tracts of land, often through foreclosure in the towns of Mt. Tabor, Danby, Dorset, Arlington, Peru, Manchester, and Groton totaling more than 50,000 acres.

He owned nine lumber mills, each with facilities to serve it. To connect his scattered holdings he installed what is believed to be the first telephone system in Vermont connecting each mill to the main office.

Lumber was not the only product from the hills. Griffith may have been wealthy but he was not wasteful, he built 35 huge charcoal kilns to convert scrap wood into charcoal, about a million bushels of it per year, which fueled factories throughout New England and made him Vermont's first millionaire. Griffith also collected the sawdust from his mills and sold it to ice houses to insulate the ice and prevent it from melting.

As a sideline he harnessed the cool mountain streams to create a fish hatchery, perhaps the first in the state, to supply the Waldorf Astoria in New York City with fresh trout. In 1898 then Senator Griffith acquired both timberland and a fish hatchery in Groton, VT. That fish hatchery was reputed to be the largest in the world and provided spawn for stocking rivers and lakes as well as adult fish for eating.

Griffith had a well-deserved reputation for squeezing both profits and workers. To prevent "clock watching" he forbid his workers to wear watches and insisted to critics that they enjoyed working from dawn to dark. Workers and their families were expected to buy their food and clothing from the company's six general stores, cycling their wages back to Griffith.

In his later years he wanted to leave a better legacy behind than his scrooge-like reputation. He donated money for the S. L. Griffith Memorial Library, which serves Danby to this day, an orphans fund and several other buildings in town.

Silas Griffith and his wife left money and instructions in their wills to establish a gift fund. At an annual Christmas party, a tradition still going strong today, each child in Danby and Mt. Tabor between the ages of 2 and 12 is to receive a gift and, by Griffith's instructions, an orange. This tradition is cherished through the generations in the two towns and has done much to burnish S. L. Griffith's legacy. In some difficult years Griffith's gifts might be the only gift a child received.

Upon Griffith's death on July 21, 1903 at his ranch in San Diego, his business empire shut down. Years of cutting had left the hillsides bare, a disgruntled enemy poisoned his fish hatchery, and charcoal was being replaced by oil.

Ultimately the Forest Service acquired much of Griffith's land which is now reforested. Abandoned buildings and mills were burned as hazards or moved, charcoal kilns were torn down, and railroad sidings pulled up. The Appalachian Trail and Vermont's Long Trail run right through the site of the former mill town of Griffith, now marked only by a few stone foundations and an enormous pile of century old sawdust.

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## Groton Historical Society

by Deborah Jurist

2019 was a productive, fun and growing year.

We hosted 5 historical programs: A Walking Tour of Groton, Antique Tools and Toys, Genealogy, Noyes Pond, and Native Americans in the Groton Area. Each program brought new folks to the Peter Paul House for refreshments and a chance

to meet others who enjoy local history. One of those was new member, Allen Goodine who shared memories of his childhood in Groton. He brought documents inherited from his Mom, Alice Goodine, including a Memoir written in 1954 by Johnny White. This wonderful collection of stories and events beginning in 1904, was transcribed, printed and is available from GHS for \$5.00.



The programs made us realize it was so difficult getting into the Peter Paul House that some folks were not coming! So we purchased a portable ramp for handicap access, that is easily rolled in and out of the garage door when needed.

Many new members were welcomed into the Society and we bid a fond farewell and huge thank you to Erik Volk and Phil Coutu, who moved out of town. Amongst the new members are Lise and Mark Shallberg. Lise now shares the secretary position with Phyllis Burke. Dwaine Smith and Susan Pelkey Smith are sharing the Treasurer position. With their expert help we are now accepting credit card payments (online only) for memberships, purchases and donations.

All summer the Peter Paul House was being cleaned and reorganized with tender loving care, spear headed by Lise Shallberg. The kitchen cupboards are tidy and mouse proof, and bedrooms were vacuumed and dusted for the first time in years.

Clothing collections were taken out of storage and documented with photographs. Mark Shallberg replaced poles in the closets and clothes are now displayed on padded hangers.



A lovely collection of Victorian Lady's Undergarments donated by Kelly Gaffney and her mother, Delores Hamlett was laundered by Phyllis Burke and labeled for a unique and beautiful exhibit on Fall Foliage Day.



The 2020 calendar displays the work of Groton artists, both living and dead, and GHS founding members as well as historical photos of Groton. Here is a sampling of the images.



**Repair and painting of the Peter Paul House will begin in the spring of 2020. Estimated cost: \$12,000. Approximately 10% has been raised so far. It will be done over 2 years.**

Some ways you can help.

- Make a tax deductible donation
- Become a lifetime member
- Purchase books
  - Purchase the 2020 calendar

If you want to use a **credit card** for any of the above, email us at [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com) and we will send you a link for secure payment.



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